

army of papal absolutism. The Roman Catholic writers say that the popes saved the world from the despotism of emperors. What is true is that the pope and the emperor contended for the mastery, and the masses gave it to the pope. What the popes did with it we know. That is history. What the emperors would have done with it is matter for conjecture. It is very probable that they would have abused the power as badly as the popes did, but conjectural history is idle.

220. Delusions. Of popular delusions one of the most striking and recurrent examples is the belief that new and despised religious sects, which are forced to meet in private, practice obscene and abominable orgies. The early Christians were accused of such rites, and they charged dissenting sects with the same.<sup>1</sup>

The Manichseans, Waldenses, Huguenots, Puritans, Luciferans, Brothers of the Free Spirit, and so on through the whole list of heretical sects, have been so charged. Lea, in his History of the Inquisition, mentions over a dozen cases of such charges, some of which were true. Nowadays the same assertions are made against freemasons by Roman Catholics.<sup>2</sup> Jews are believed by the peasants of eastern Europe to practice abominable rites in secret. The idea that secret sects use the blood of people not of their sect, especially of babies, in base rites is only a variant of the broad idea about secret rites. It is sometimes said that the charges were invented to make sects unpopular, but it is more probable that they arose from the secrecy of the meetings only.

Christians are so charged now in China.<sup>3</sup> The story of the discovery of such misbehavior always contains the same explanation — a husband followed his wife to the meeting and saw the

proceedings.<sup>4</sup>

221. Manias need suggestion. Manias and delusions are like fashions and fads in that they always seem to need a suggestion from some outside source, and often it is impossible to find such a source. A strong popular belief, like the belief in Satan and demons, furnishes a ground for a general disposition to hold some other people responsible for all the ills which befall one's

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *Eur. Morals*, I, 414, 417. <sup>8</sup> *N\* K Times*, January 9, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> Hansen, *Zauberwahn*^ etc., 227.\* Lea, *Inquis*^ II, 373.